



POCAHONTAS.
From a Painting by Sully.

In the winter of 1608 the colony was in great distress from lack of provisions. Powhatan knew of its condition and invited Smith to make him a visit at Werowocomoco, with the request that Smith should build him a house, give him a grindstone, fifty swords, some firearms, a hen and rooster, and much beads and copper. In return for these Powhatan promised large supplies of corn. Smith was only too glad to accept the invitation, for he had come to believe that the old chief had made up his mind to starve the colony by withholding all supplies of corn and refusing all efforts at any trade for the same. Already he had determined upon extreme and desperate measures, nothing less than the capture of Powhatan himself and the holding of him as a ransom for food. It seems that Powhatan had been doing some thinking and planning himself. He had about come to the conclusion that unless something was done to the Englishmen they would eventually drive him and his people further inward, and he in turn was planning to capture Smith; hence his very gracious invitation.

The weather was exceedingly cold, and Smith and his party made slow headway in sailing. On account of stormy weather, they were compelled to stop at the village of Kecoughtan and to spend a week. It was Christmas time. Here they were feasted on oysters, venison and wild fowl. We are told, also, that Smith and two of his companions amused themselves by hunting, and killed one hundred and forty-eight wild fowl in three shots. One can imagine how these Englishmen on Christmas eve gathered close around the fire in one of the rude Indian huts, and how their thoughts must have crossed over the seas to their old homes and firesides in England. Men less brave and determined, under such a spell, would have quailed before the dangers and uncertainties of the journey upon which they had come. The marvelous resource of their brave captain must have been mightily drawn upon in the effort to entertain his brave followers and to bring good cheer to the storm-bound group far away from the blessings of their English homes. Yet even at such a time, and under such unpropitious circumstances, the brave, good nature of the sturdy Englishman undoubtedly asserted itself, and before the evening was far spent many a shout of laughter might have been heard by any eavesdropping Indian. One wonders if the Christmas-tide softened in any way their feeling towards the Indians, and if, yielding to its gracious spell, they took up their journey less intent upon doing violent harm or hurt because of the lonely Christmas eve they had spent together around the fire in the rude cabin planted in the midst of an untamed wilderness.

After the week had expired they took up their journey, and finally reached Werowocomoco on the 12th of January. The ice covered the York River from shore to shore, leaving only the narrowest channel in the middle of the river. After coming ashore through the frozen marshlands, the Englishmen found shelter for themselves in the nearest cabins. Smith sent a message to Powhatan announcing that he was in the neighborhood, and asking that he furnish them with provisions. The chief answered in his usual generous way, sending great quantities of bread, venison and turkeys. The next day he perpetrated a piece of grim sarcasm by sending a very

polite request to know when they were going to move on. He added that, if they had come for corn they would be disappointed, because he himself had no corn and that his people had less than he had, but if they wanted corn very much, he might be able to get them a little in exchange for swords. Smith complained that this treatment was unjust, as he had come by invitation. Powhatan treated the matter as though it was a great joke, and asked the Englishmen to proceed to show their goods, insisting, however, that he had no corn to exchange except for swords and guns. Smith gave him to understand, as plainly as possible, that any exchange of swords or guns was absolutely impossible, and then followed a long and skilful parley. Greek met Greek; it was give and take through the livelong day between two smart masters of diplomacy, each looking for the opportunity to have the other in his power. Smith requested that the savages break the ice from the river bank so that his boat might come to the shore and take himself and the corn aboard. He was not feeling altogether comfortable with the bulk of his men so far removed from him, and he thought that if these men could be brought ashore he might be able to surprise the old chief. While they were waiting for the Indians to break away the ice, Smith was beguiling the old chief with a most engaging and moving address, protesting his great devotion to the chief, whom he called, with great unction, "Father"; but Powhatan was somewhat of an orator himself, and knew quite as well as Smith how to employ smooth and soothing terms of endearment, exchanging every time a Roland for Smith's Oliver. It was soon discovered that Powhatan was not to be easily fooled. He succeeded finally in breaking away from Captain Smith's bewitching eloquence and fled unceremoniously with his women and children. It looked as though it was with this desperate effort that he shook off the witchery into which Smith was slowly hypnotizing him. To avoid any suspicion, he took the precaution of leaving behind him two or three women who were to engage Smith, holding his attention while the Powhatan warriors surrounded the cabin in which they were. Smith, to avoid capture, rushed from the cabin and fired his pistol. The savages tumbled over each other in their haste to get safely beyond the reach of the bullets.

Powhatan was greatly chagrined at the failure of this strategy, and he realized that something ought to be done to remove the unfavorable impression which the sudden and violent appearance of so many of his men must have made upon the minds of the Englishmen. Accordingly, he sent a deputy to convey to Captain Smith the assurances of his great affection, and ask that he accept as tokens of his good will the bracelet and a string of pearls. In the meanwhile a number of Indians brought baskets of corn to load Smith's vessel with, and, with a most amusing naivete, offered to guard the guns of the English while they loaded the boat. Smith declared that a proceeding just to the reverse of that would be more to his liking, and proceeded to persuade them to lay down their arms, which the Englishmen guarded while the Indians with celerity carried the corn aboard, having lost, at the sight of their loaded and lighted guns in the hands of the Englishmen, whatever valorous intention they may have harbored.

On account of the low tide Smith and his companions were obliged to remain over night at Werowocomoco. They accordingly returned to the cabins in which they had been quartered. The savages remained with them until nightfall, entertaining them with many merry savage sports.

In the meantime Powhatan was calling together his forces and agitating the destruction of his guests. The Englishmen were alone in the Indian cabin. Suddenly Pocahontas, whom Smith described as "Powhatan's dearest jewel and daughter," appeared in the cabin before the Englishmen. She had come through the dark and cold night unattended from her father's cabin. She told the English that Powhatan had provided a great feast for their supper, and that he conspired to come suddenly upon them preoccupied with their supper and with their own weapons destroy them. She therefore earnestly advised that, if they cared for their lives, they would be gone immediately. Captain Smith, grateful for this brave and timely warning, pressed some gifts upon the Indian princess, things that the childish heart must have greatly delighted in; but she said, with tears in her eyes, "I dare not to be seen to have any, for if Powhatan should know it I am but dead," and she ran away into the woods and disappeared out of sight. It turned out surely enough as she had spoken. The savages came bringing great platters of things to eat. They begged the Englishmen to put out the matches to their guns, as the smoke made them very sick, and to sit down and eat their supper. Captain Smith made the Indians to eat first of every dish, and then sent them back to Powhatan, telling him to make haste, for he was awaiting his arrival. Through the night there was constant coming and going of messengers back and forth from the chief, and though to every appearance they were on friendly terms, they were exceedingly careful